ABSTRACT

What Happened to Public Deliberation?

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Today, discussions about politics look more like battle than thoughtful conversations aimed at working toward the common good. My thesis is an effort to imagine what a more healthy political discourse might look like. To do this, I do three things: examine the common good and its place in a liberal regime, recover fundamental ideals that are related to public deliberation from our political theoretical tradition, and engage with some of the literature on the movement called "deliberative democracy." I look at it critically, seeing what it has to offer us in light of the common good and the tradition that I have outlined. I conclude by bringing together these three elements to understand what happened to public deliberation, and offer a few ideas on how we might bring our society's discourse closer to something that looks more like cooperative discussion than battle.

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WHAT HAPPENED TO PUBLIC DELIBERATION?

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PREFACE

I remember that at our first thesis informational meeting, Dr. Al Beck told us to remember that this undergraduate thesis would not be each student's *magnum opus*. This may have been one of the best pieces of general advice that I received throughout this process. Because I am the kind of student that takes good advice to heart, I listened. It also helped to remember that undergraduate honors theses are written in a short amount of time while taking a full complement of courses.

Taking this into account, when I brought my idea to Dr. David Corey, I had a simple outline. It involved defining public deliberation by its character, the degree of participation necessary, and the space in which it might take place. While I hope to still have addressed some of these points, this thesis has become something altogether different. It represents the beginnings of a theory. This theory, of course, is what we have termed "public deliberation." It grew out of a genuine frustration about a practical problem that needs to be addressed.

Public deliberation is an incomplete theory as it stands in this thesis. While I am certainly happy to have some foundation for later work on the subject, I hope that any readers will understand that this does not represent a comprehensive, practical theory. If those who read this thesis are moved to have conversations with others about the idea of public deliberation, or question themselves about what their thoughts are on public deliberation as it stands here, I will be glad.

This is not my great work. It is an honest attempt to begin defining and defending public deliberation as I envision it. I suspect that I have decided to address a problem that has no definite solution, but it has been well worth the effort.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to many people for their help and support over the past year as I worked on this thesis. I could not have completed this without them.

I must first mention that this thesis is not a product of just one year of work. I could not approach public deliberation like I do here without having been pushed to carefully and critically consider texts over my four years at Baylor University. Every one of my professors has been instrumental in developing my ability to do this, and while that list would be too long to put here, I hope that they all know that they played a part in the development of this thesis.

My friends and family also deserve a great deal of gratitude. They kept me sane, reminding me that there are only so many hours in a day that one can productively work on any one project. They listened intently as I tried to explain public deliberation as coherently as I possibly could, which helped me become more comfortable articulating the basic points of my thesis. I wrote with these people in mind, and hope that they could all pick up this thesis and understand it with relative ease.

I must also thank the members of my thesis committee. These are Drs. David Corey, Jerold Waltman, and Robert Miner. They took the time to not only read my thesis, but also to be active participants in a thoughtful conversation about my ideas. During my defense, they asked questions that helped me to better understand my own position on some points, and brought up issues that I had not considered in my thesis. Their feedback has given me a sense of how I can expand upon public deliberation in the future.

Dr. David Corey deserves more acknowledgment than I can adequately express. I could not have asked for a more patient, insightful, and invested advisor. He challenged me to do more than I thought I could, and helped to transform the inkling of an idea that I brought to him last February into something more substantial. His edits and advice were essential to determining an appropriate method and structure by which I might address public deliberation. The help he provided is invaluable, and I am ever thankful to have been able to work with him during my time at Baylor.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Problem

There is a fundamental problem with how we talk (or do not talk) about politics. It has always been a source of frustration for me to be told that politics does not belong in polite conversation. The only acceptable forum for conversation about political issues seemed to be organized, competitive debates, or inside one's own head. This left me unsatisfied. Competitive debate appeared problematic because it leaves no room for compromise. Internal conversation, on the other hand, is too insular. It denies one the opportunity to be challenged on a rational basis by another interlocutor, preventing one from addressing other viewpoints. Neither of these seems like an option that encourages citizens to talk with each other about significant political issues in a reasonable and cooperative way. In fact, the prevalence of debate as a means by which we can appropriately address politics in public is not only unsatisfactory, but also harmful to political conversation.

What I mean by this can be seen in conversations between friends, family members, or even new acquaintances. In my personal experience, too many people who decide that politics is not too taboo to talk about end up treating the conversation as a battle, in which neither party is willing to compromise. The goal of such a conversation is not to come to a well-reasoned understanding of the issues and what might be best for the good of the nation as a whole, but instead to convince your discussion partner and any spectators that

your position is the correct one. I contend that this treatment of political conversation as a battleground extends even beyond whatever personal experiences I have had. Examples can be seen on television shows that reinforce a winner/loser approach to political conversation with talking heads like Rush Limbaugh, James Carville, Wolf Blitzer, and Bill O'Reilly. Surely, these programs are not the best model for civic conversation.

Unfortunately, not even our government provides us with a model for cooperative deliberation. It was only last year that our legislators refused to come to an agreement on the federal budget and the raising of the debt ceiling. Members of both parties seemed to prefer arguing for extremes over agreeing to compromise. Republicans requested deep spending cuts and refuse to raise taxes, while Democrats resisted cuts and wanted to raise taxes primarily on the wealthy. In a special address to the nation, President Obama talked about the debt-ceiling debacle, and his rhetoric hit on some of my frustrations. He identifies citizens as being "fed up with a town where compromise has become a dirty word," and acknowledges the frustration that they might feel "when…all they see is the same partisan three-ring circus here in Washington. They see leaders who can't seem to come together and do what it takes to make life just a little bit better for ordinary Americans."[1] While, ultimately, a compromise was struck, this stalemate sets a poor example for citizens. If our representatives cannot be expected to come to the table with a spirit of compromise and an eye to the common good, how can we as citizens be expected to do so?

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[1] Barack Obama, "Address by the President to the Nation," 25 July, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/07/25/address-president-nation.

I am not naïve. I do not pretend that practical politics does not require that decisions be made and actions taken. However, to understand politics fundamentally as a war in which the strong prevail over the weak is different from understanding it as a process, even a fraught one, in which citizens and representatives struggle to articulate the content of the common good. We seem to view politics today too much in terms of war and not enough in terms of commonality. This appears to me at once unbecoming and unsustainable.

This is, at heart, a thought experiment. While the practical issues that arise from my questions may beg for remedies, it is not my intention here to offer some concrete plan which, if followed, would result in the widespread use of public deliberation. Of course, after doing research and spending time thinking about public deliberation as an idea in itself, I hope that I can offer an idea or two on how to expose people to the idea of deliberating cooperatively when it comes to politics. My primary aim here is to flesh out what public deliberation might entail, investigate why it would have salutary effects on the nation, and to see what others have been doing in an attempt to deal with the same issues that frustrate me.

I am not alone when it comes to wondering about this thing I call public deliberation. The idea goes back to Plato and extends through contemporary deliberative democratic theory. Had I not been exposed to writers within the political theoretical tradition and contemporary theorists, my frustration with the tenor of political discussion might not have resulted in this thesis. As I read through various thinkers' works, however, I realized that while very few of them except for deliberative democratic theorists have written dedicated treatises on public deliberation, many of them still

address the problem in their works. It seems, then, that this is a problem that has endured over time and crossed geographical boundaries.

Question

To confront this problem, we must ask the right questions. The main question is how can we move closer to a form of public deliberation about pressing issues in which citizens strive collectively to articulate the common good? This question can be broken down into important and difficult sub-questions. What is the common good? Why does deliberation *need* to be collective? How collective need it be? What does it mean to "strive collectively" in deliberation? What kind of deliberation are we engaging in now, if any at all? Finally, where might such deliberation occur?

Why Bother?

A question that I would like to briefly and directly respond to is "why bother?" Why is this kind of inquiry necessary? My answer is simple, perhaps too simple. I ask you to look back on the events of last year related to the budget and the debt ceiling, which I have already mentioned. Should we be happy when our government is threatened with being shut down because those men and women who are supposed to be representing our interests cannot compromise? Would it not be preferable to see representatives coming together and meeting in the middle so that the federal government can continue running? The stakes are higher than even this example might convey. Public deliberation would encourage citizens to be more mindful of political issues and the effect that politics can have not just on them, but on the nation. Unwillingness to sacrifice and compromise for the common good can mean death for a nation, as we will

see in the chapters to follow. This seems enough reason for me to raise these questions about how we should talk about politics.

Method

How might one even begin to answer such questions? Luckily the problem is not new, and many writers have tackled it before. The method I use here is eclectic, but I think it is appropriate. I want to begin with what has been said, especially by the most reflective writers. I thus lean on the long tradition of liberal-philosophical texts as well as on even more seminal texts stretching back to Greek antiquity. Certain authors prove essential in my exploration of the issue, these include: Plato, Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Rawls. At the same time, the problem with which I am wrestling has not been "solved," by these authors, and so it is impossible to limit myself to reading and interpreting their texts. One must think through and beyond them. I think this is especially the case on the matter of "where" public deliberation should take place, and for obvious reasons. We are a nation of more than 300 million people covering a geographic area that is many times the size of the cities imagined by writers such as Plato and Rousseau.[2] In this sense I am apprenticing myself to the tradition, but not enslaving myself to it.

I also address some of the contemporary literature on a theory called "deliberative democracy." I primarily look to Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson's book, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*. In doing this, I am able to understand how scholars are responding to the same frustrations that I have. This allows me to look more critically at

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[2] U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html, accessed 11 April 2012.

my own work, and affords me the opportunity to evaluate the work of others in light of the research that I have done.

Roadmap

I have two main objectives in this thesis. One is to think through the problems of political discussion today. The other is to better understand public deliberation and what it entails. To do this, I start with an examination of the common good, using the aid of thinkers before me who have ideas of what the common good is and how we can know it. Once those questions are addressed, I move on to investigating the details of public deliberation. This requires recovering a tradition of thought that I can cobble together into a more meaningful definition of public deliberation than I can provide at the outset of this project. Having dealt with both the common good and my own definition of public deliberation, I then look at the work of Gutmann and Thompson. In my conclusion, I attempt to tie up any loose ends and offer some general ideas on how we might be able to become a nation of citizens and representatives not only capable of but excited to engage in public deliberation.

CHAPTER TWO

The Common Good

Introduction

I have been arguing that public deliberation is too competitive and combative, that we have lost the sense of deliberation in the name of the common good. A problem may be that there is no such thing as the "common good" in a liberal regime properly understood, that the whole notion of "common good" belongs to a pre-liberal view of politics. This is the claim that many libertarians make today. But I am not sure it is true. Certainly, one finds a notion of the common good in ancient and medieval political texts. I'd like to begin by seeing what the phrase means in these contexts. But is it true that there can be no common good in liberal regimes? I want to argue that there are two different ways of understanding the common good—one that focuses on the health of the regime as a whole, and one that focuses on aggregate individual interests. The second of these conceptions is frequently invoked in politics today. It is a chief criterion by which policies are defended in public discourse. It is, however, problematic insofar as the power of government is being used for the advancement of private (albeit aggregated private) interests. This is why the libertarians—who are after all classical liberals—are against it. But it is also, I think, why the tenor of political debate is so heated. We really are engaged in a war for scarce public resources, and the name of the game is to win these resources for our pet (private) interests. In the meantime, the first conception of the common good, ancient and medieval in origin, is rarely invoked today in political life. If

and when it is invoked, it is done so with questionable sincerity. And yet, the ancients may have something to teach us here. For there are indeed certain things that are required for the overall health of a polity, and if we fail to attend to these, it is virtually certain that there will be deleterious long-term consequences. The reason we do not like to talk about such "common goods," is that they necessarily involve the subordination of the individual to the polity, at least to some extent, and this strikes us as an affront to our individualism and liberty. Yet, I want to insist that such public goods exist and require attention.

The Common Good in Ancient and Medieval Contexts

Plato's Republic

Plato's *Republic* offers a foundation for understanding the common good and its place in the city. When Socrates begins describing the city of "utmost necessity," which he identifies as "a healthy city," a citizen contributes to the whole by committing his talents to one occupation and offering it as currency in fair trade with others.[3] This division of labor allows each man to focus on one job and still be able to provide his family with the other necessities of life. The trade-off is the inability to satisfy a man's varied interests. Should a citizen attempt to devote time to another job, it is possible that he might ruin his work by missing "the crucial moment."[4] This is for the benefit of the city as a whole. Everyone gives up a piece of his independence and lets go of hobbies to

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[3] Plato, *The Republic of Plato: Second Edition*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 370d, 372e.

[4] Ibid., 370b.

ensure that the city can support the basic needs of all. It is in this spirit of give and take that citizens tend to the common good.

As the city in speech is further developed, Socrates addresses the common good with even more force upon hearing a complaint from Adeimantus. Adeimantus is concerned with the happiness of the guardians, who cannot "possess lands, and build fine big houses, and possess all the accessories that go along with these things, and make private sacrifices to gods," which sound like luxuries that we might recognize as the spoils of success. Socrates responds, saying that "in founding the city we are not looking to the exceptional happiness of any one group among us but, as far as possible, that of the city as a whole."[5] This is the essence of the common good. It focuses on the city, as one whole being, instead of on the interests or particular good of its constituent parts.[6] The key is "assigning what's suitable to each of [the parts]" which makes "the whole fair."[7] In being given and fulfilling a natural assignment, each group of citizens can reap "its share of happiness."[8] Though each individual man may be less than fully satisfied, the city can thrive in the happiness that is shared when everyone works toward the good of all. Indeed, this means sacrificing outlandish rewards to which successful men may be

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[5] Ibid., 420b.

[6] This, of course, is complicated as for the whole to work, its parts must be content. Also, if people are tending to the good of the whole, it is likely that at least some of a nation's will be happy.

[7] Ibid., 420d.

[8] Ibid., 421c.

accustomed, or even abandoning dreams of personal advancement for one's own sake, but the benefit is a healthy city with the common good at its fore.[9]

At a more metaphorical level, Socrates also demonstrates a devotion to the principles of the common good in his own actions as the leader of a community of interlocutors. The establishment of a "city" can be inferred from Socrates' continued references to phrases used in the assembly that indicate a resolution has been made.[10] Although captive, Socrates directs the conversation, and it is obvious that he has assumed the role of leader in this dialogic community. He allows everyone to speak and offer any objections that they have to his conclusions about justice or the *kallipolis* in general. In this way, Socrates ensures that the creation of the city-in-speech is a collaborative effort. That being said, he uses the objections of the others to teach what is best for their community as a whole. Even the interlocutors seem to sense that there are some things that are in the best interest of all.[11] Additionally, Socrates analogizes a good ruler to a good shepherd, whose art is to care "for nothing but providing the best for what it has been set over," indicating that rulers should take into account what is in the best interest of their subjects, which would require an understanding that there are some things which

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[9] While the implications of Socrates' city in speech are important, the city in speech must be kept in a certain perspective. It is not a blueprint for a practical society. It is a thought experiment that demonstrates what a city would look like if the citizens focused only on the city. This would seem impossible to practice because human nature does not lend itself easily to such selflessness. I do not think that Socrates expects this kind of action from people.

[10] Ibid., 328b, 450a,

[11] I am particularly thinking of the men who hold Thrasymachus back until Socrates is prepared to address his concerns. That seems to be action in the interest of the whole at 336b.

are beneficial to the whole.[12] The idea of the common good is one that does not seem to be complicated by a division in its treatment in speech or in action. Because it is treated similarly in both word and deed, the common good might be the most stable element of the *Republic*. While the exact nature of the common good seems unknowable, the essence of the idea is so important that it is presented throughout the dialogue with a unity that distinguishes it from other ideas in the dialogue.[13] That is to say that other ideas like happiness or peace are either contradicted or extremely vague in the text.

Aristotle's Politics

Aristotle also articulates an idea of the common good. In fact, he alludes to two political problems that we might recognize. The first is that if individuals take priority over the city, both will cease to exist. To understand why, he analogizes the city to a body, and individuals to a body's distinct parts, writing that "the whole is necessarily prior to the part[s]…there will be neither foot nor hand when the whole body has been destroyed," this makes "clear, then, that the city exists by nature and that it has priority over the individual."[14] Without the city, individuals must be self-sufficient. A community provides individuals the ability to cultivate a talent that can help them secure their living. Outside of the city, a man would have to be able to provide for himself. He

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[12] Ibid., 345d.

[13] The common good is unintelligible insofar as Socrates does not indicate that knowledge of the good is possible. He acknowledges that he has not attained it, and seems to believe that it would be impossible for any human being to gain an understanding of it.

[14] Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1253a18.

must sow and reap his own crops, do his own hunting, construct his own shelter, and defend himself. Such a life would be so barbaric or so difficult that Aristotle claims that those surviving outside of the city must be "either beast or god."[15] Given this analogy and the need for self-sufficiency outside of a city, Aristotle clearly posits that when individuals take priority over the city as a whole, destruction of both is imminent.

Indeed, the superiority of the individual is the root of the second relevant political problem that Aristotle identifies. The problem is democracy's tendency to work to "the advantage of the needy" which does not represent "what is profitable in common."[16] Democracy allows the poor majority to establish a political presence that can result in policy that benefits them directly without considering the needs of the city as a whole. As an extreme example, imagine people clamoring for uncontrolled welfare and exorbitant tax hikes on the wealthy. While the welfare programs could probably be sustained for a short time, wealthy business owners would most likely move to more accommodating countries—taking with them jobs, tax dollars, and other intangibles that could profoundly affect the health of the nation. Eventually, the welfare state could no longer be supported, and the country as a whole could be left in a state of ruin.

Seeing problems like these, Aristotle asserts that a correct regime is one that "look[s] to the common advantage," and requires citizens, "though being dissimilar to each other, [to] have the safety of the community as their work."[17] We must be careful not to conflate the common advantage with the common good. For Aristotle, "the

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 1279b4.

[17] Ibid., 1279a17, 1276b20.

political good is justice, and justice is the common advantage."[18] Justice, then, is not the sum of the common good. Instead, it is a component of the common good, which could be more accurately described as "what is profitable in common" for the "whole city."[19] This asks individuals to place the needs of the city above their own, acknowledging that a healthy city allows them to live more successfully than they could if they looked purely to their own interests—which could lead to the destruction of the city and force upon them the weight of self-sufficiency outside of a city. The spirit of the common good here requires that the community be kept safe and whole, ever keeping the interest of the city in the minds of individuals and sub-groups.[20]

Aquinas' De Regimine Principum[21]

Aquinas echoes the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle on the common good. Like Aristotle, he points out that "man is by nature a social and political animal, who lives in a community."[22] Although men are given the faculty of reason to help them provide for their needs, "one man…is not able to equip himself with all these things, for one man

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[18] Ibid., 1282b14.

[19] Ibid., 1279b4, 1283b35.

[20] Aristotle, then, does not require the kind of radical devotion to the state that Socrates might seem to want. He allows people to have their own concerns in mind, but reminds them of the costs of indulging one's private interests at the expense of the common good. He sees an inherent difficulty in trying to balance these two interests, and tries to put them together in one city.

[21] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Political Writings*, ed. Robert Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[22] Ibid., 6.

cannot live a self-sufficient life."[23] The solution, then, in keeping with the nature of man, is "a community of free men […] ordered by a ruler in such a way as to secure the common good.[24] Of the three thinkers addressed here, Aquinas is the only one to define exactly what securing the common good entails. The ruler (which, in a democracy, is the people) is responsible for securing the good, and charged with this directive he must ensure the following things: (1) the people must "live well," meaning that the ruler must lead them to act "according to virtue," (2) have "sufficiency of bodily goods," and (3) live "in the unity of peace."[25] The common good will be served and a city and its citizens preserved if all legislation serves one of these three purposes. Each could entail sacrifices to ensure that everyone is assured of these things. Acting virtuously is not always the easiest course of action, securing the essentials of life for each person often requires that those with more means share with those less fortunate, and it takes a selfless attitude to live peacefully when one could prefer his own advancement to the safekeeping of the unity that comes with peace.

When people do not tend to the common, and care only about "what is convenient for himself, the community would break up into its various parts."[26] Even an aggregation of private interests is unacceptable, as "individual interests and the common good are not the same."[27] Not only is the dissolution of the community at stake, but also just rule, for

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 8.

[25] Ibid., 43-44.

[26] Ibid., 7.

[27] Ibid.

when "the government is directed not towards the common good but towards the private good of the ruler [or in the case of oligarchies and democracies, rulers], rule of this kind will be unjust and perverted."[28] If the focus of a state shifts to serve the good of the ruler, then an injustice is being done. Again, it seems that a state and its citizens cannot survive if the people do not put the common good above their own private interests.

Aquinas' work represents the ideas found in Plato and Aristotle on the common good brought to medieval times. These three thinkers address the problems that a city faces when it no longer seeks the common good. The results are disastrous, and it is impossible not to question politics today in light of their writings. How did we make the move from the superiority of the common good to things like the "common interest," "aggregation of private interests," and "public good," none of which puts the same emphasis on a substantive common good that promotes the health of the city as a whole?

Liberalism and the Shift to the Common Interest

I suspect that part of the answer to the question of how we moved from the "common good" to appellations like the "common interest" and "public good" can be found in the writings of seminal authors from the modern liberal tradition. It is within works by Hobbes and Locke that we can find examples of the common good becoming infused with individualistic concerns, resulting in a radically different idea that turns the previous foundation of the common good on its head.

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[28] Ibid., 8.

Hobbes' Leviathan

In Hobbes' *Leviathan*, men come together and form a commonwealth[29] primarily following the instinct for self-preservation, which leads to "a more contented life...that is to say," being "out of that miserable condition of Warre."[30] Before the institution of a commonwealth, men live in a state of nature. For Hobbes, this is a "a condition of Warre of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own Reason," and since there is no one to help him against his enemies, "every man has a Right to every thing; even to one anothers body."[31] In this warring state, every man stands to benefit the most by looking out only for his own interests, and there are no rules that define justice or injustice.[32]

Because of these problems, it follows that men would want to protect themselves from others by forming a commonwealth. Hobbes defines such a commonwealth by its sovereign, who is "one person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their Peace and Common Defence."[33] Is this it, then? If so, then people come together and submit their will to the

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[29] Interestingly, Hobbes' focus in the second part of *Leviathan* is on what he calls "common-wealth." This terminology seems to imply some acknowledgement of the importance of the common.

[30] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 117.

[31] Ibid., 91.

[32] Ibid., 90.

[33] Ibid., 121.

sovereign so that he can do two things: maintain peace amongst citizens and defend the state as a whole against aggressive individuals or states. This ruler looks somewhat different than Socrates as ruler in the Republic. Whereas in the Republic, Socrates is willing to entertain additions, questions, and objections from the people, the citizens of Hobbes' commonwealth are called unjust for making any "Protestation against any of [the] Decrees" and can "not accuse any man but himselfe" for the actions of the sovereign, whether they be unjust or not.[34] This sovereign, however, is necessary because the "Passions of men, are commonly more potent than their Reason. From whence it follows, that where the publique and private interest are most closely united, there is the publique most advanced."[35] Here, we get a notion of the public interest. It is, however, tempered by the needs of private interests. The public interest is tended to only insofar as it serves private interests. While Hobbes does not explicitly leave out the possibility of the undefined public interest, he does not clarify what it is or its importance. The focus remains on the sovereign, who provides citizens with liberty which:

> Lyeth therefore only in those things, which in regulating their actions, the Soveraign hath praetermitted: such as is the Liberty to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one another; to choose their own aboad, their own diet, their own trade of life, and institute their children as they themselves think fit; & the like.[36]

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[34] Ibid., 123-4.

[35] Ibid., 131.

[36] Ibid., 148.

Now, at least in this definition of the liberty of the subjects, two more benefits are added to the commonwealth. These are the ability to engage in industry with other citizens, thereby being able to secure one's own interest with respect to money, and the right to make his own choices when it comes to personal decisions. The focus, however, is on the individual.

Despite all of this, I am not entirely convinced that the common good is missing from this text. Indeed, when Hobbes mentions a public interest, he opens the door for readers to wonder what he means by that. The duty that the sovereign has to keep the peace, provide defense, and allow for free exchange of goods does seem to be directed toward something that might be the public interest. This represents a change of terminology from common good to public interest. The importance of this change, however, should be seen in light of the fact that Hobbes is writing about a commonwealth. If the sovereign and his decrees are advancing the public interest, then the need for citizens to submit wholly to him and his decrees can be seen as akin to what Socrates, Aristotle, and Aquinas ask of them. Of course, the public interest that I have fashioned from the text may not be what Hobbes intended, but as he never gives a clear definition of what the public interest entails, my extrapolated definition must suffice for this paper.

An interesting thing to note before I move on to Locke is Hobbes' public religion, which is "Worship that a Common-wealth performeth, as one Person."[37] While the purpose of such a religion could be to help keep peace by preventing civil war, it also carries with it a sense of something that is good for the many. A commonwealth as a

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[37] Ibid., 249.

whole might be protected by some divine power should they all come together as one in this matter. It asks citizens to keep their own religious beliefs and practices in the private sphere, in some ways negating the liberty that these people have to choose their own way of life. Certainly, the institution of a nationwide religion could be a knee-jerk reaction to the political issues of Hobbes' lifetime, but I doubt that Hobbes had only this in mind when he decided to insert it into a text that is at once both massive and cohesive.

John Locke

John Locke is another modern liberal thinker whose writings also show the growing influence of individualistic tendencies in governments. Here, I specifically address his *Letter Concerning Toleration* and *Second Treatise*.

In the *Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke defines a commonwealth as a "society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own civil interests."[38] What is this civil interest, which seems to be in place of the common good? "Civil interests" are "life, liberty, health, and indolence of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like."[39] These things are all well and good. A nation that advances these interests surely would not be too terrible. Who does not hope that by being a part of a county, one might secure at least these simple liberties? And yet, something is lacking. Is this the *telos* of the commonwealth? We must remember that even in a place where everyone is free to have possession over their lives, purchase private land, and stay healthy, not everyone will necessarily be able

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[38] John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, (New York: Filiquarian Publishing, 2007), 8.

[39] Ibid., 8.

to fully enjoy these liberties. Freedom does not automatically equal ability to fully realize freedom.

On the other hand, there are some benefits to a place that commits itself to the advancement of these interests. While such interests may be centered on individuals, a country whose people are satisfied on these basic levels could be the foundation for a healthy commonwealth. That being said, it is not something that Locke explicitly acknowledges. The difference here can be more concretely explained with an example. Think of a marriage. A Lockean marriage, then, might look something like this. Partner A likes fine cheese and expensive shoes. Partner B has a preference for fruit and flip-flops.[40] If both partners get everything that they want, they might also be happy in their marriage as well. This assumption seems to be a stretch. There is more to a marriage than the fulfillment of each person's wants. One cannot simply tend to one's own needs and expect for the marriage to be successful. A more Aristotelian marriage might perhaps ask these partners to consider what is good for the marriage as a whole. Add in to the mix that both partners now decide that it could be beneficial for them to go on a weekly walk together to talk and exercise. This is something that requires both to give of their time in the name of the marriage. While both of them getting the shoes that they want is nice, it does not necessarily contribute to the health of the marriage. It is, perhaps, unfair to compare shoes and snack preferences to things like life and indolence of body, but the main point here is to understand these goods as more individualized in nature as compared to dedicating time to the health of the marriage.

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[40] What a strange couple this is.

In his *Second Treatise*, Locke mentions the public good, but also places some limits on it that are not present in the ancients. His definition comes somewhat close to Hobbes' with some key differences. Strictly speaking, Locke never defines the public good. Instead it must be inferred that it is to be understood in relation to the contexts in which the phrase is used. Indeed, he does not write about the common interest when outlining the beginning of political societies. Instead he leaves decisions in the hands of the majority, which assumes that the majority has knowledge of what is best.[41] This also represents a break between Locke and his predecessors. The majority is not the competent ruler of the ancients, and the inclusion of the majority is not compatible with Hobbes' absolute sovereign and his censorship of the people in all matters pertaining to the state. At least here, deliberation is possible. Locke seems to limit the public good to including the securing of property and preservation of life.[42] This, too, lacks depth. Like Hobbes, he includes no notion of the common interest as being necessary to life (instead of just the preservation of it) or to help impart meaning to life and virtue to men. The public good is reduced to individual needs. It is a response to a citizen who requests merely to be kept alive and otherwise left alone to pursue his own private interests. Simple majority rule also cannot be expected to represent what is best for the people because of issues with factions, lack of full participation of citizens in voting, and the inability of the masses to know what is best.

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[41] John Locke, *The Second Treatise*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 333.

[42] Ibid., 353, 357.

Considering both Hobbes and Locke, we can see that there is at least some sense of the common good present in modernity. It simply is directed more toward individuals. It is a liberal definition that is consistent with a person's need for freedom and protection. Free from the fear of a warring state of nature, free to excel in one's own right without undue hindrance from others, and protection from foreigners and fellow citizens who would violate another's liberty.

Modern Liberal Influence on Contemporary Thought and Practice

In this section, I identify how key elements of modern liberal thought have impacted both contemporary political thought and practice. I must stress that the effect of thinkers like Hobbes and Locke may not be what they had intended. These elements have been extracted from their overarching ideas—used, in a way, out of their overarching contexts. In the field of theory, I address the relationship between liberalism and libertarianism. In the field of practice, I look at State of the Union addresses from United States Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

Theory. I would like to briefly look at libertarianism as a contemporary outgrowth of the ideas of the modern liberals mentioned in this chapter. Specifically, it is an outgrowth that fosters hyper-individualism and rejects the common good. The literature on libertarianism is substantial, and this is in part caused by the tension between various branches of this theory. I believe that this investigation will be helpful in my attempt to understand how modern liberalism has influenced contemporary political theory. Indeed, its roots can be found in Locke's work. For almost all major branches of Libertarianism, citizens' conduct must comply with Locke's "law of nature, [which] holds that 'being all

equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, liberty or possessions.'"[43] With this in mind, citizens are free to act as "self-owners" who can extend their ownership to the products of their labors.[44]

What most strikes me is the emphasis on the individual. The government generally seems to take a backseat to privatization and reliance on rational choices of autonomous individuals. Negative liberty is embraced over positive liberty. This hyper-individualizes nations, and ignores at least the classical-medieval sense of the common good, if not also the more limited sense of the common good found in Hobbes and Locke. With a minimized government, negative liberty as law, and a focus on the individual, the common good becomes nothing more than aggregated private interests. While these private interests include safety, much of the academic writing today focuses on economics and private property. These concerns are not at all characteristic of the common good, which asks citizens to be virtuous and to put aside the desire for personal gain in the interest of the whole. Indeed, cooperation would seem to only come into play insofar as each individual obeys Locke's natural laws and respects another's life and property. This does not require deliberation. Its focus on private economic prosperity is at loggerheads with the idea of the common good. Interestingly, not every branch of libertarian thought believes that Locke's qualification on private property should be followed. This qualification, of course, is that which limits a person to claiming only as much as he can use. However, Locke notes that the introduction of money into a society

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[43] Matt Zwolinski, "Libertarianism," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://www.iep.utm.edu/libertar/ 2008), accessed 1 April 2012, 2a.

[44] Ibid., 2a.

negates this proviso. Whether or not that is salutary to a nation is up for grabs. I am inclined to believe that the dismissal of that proviso, along with Locke's qualification on the proviso when money comes into the picture, leads to a widening of socio-economic gaps—thereby intensifying the fight for resources. This is anti-thetical to my hope for public deliberation, and I hope that creating a relationship between libertarian ideals and current political practice will lend itself to fleshing out the barriers to cooperative discussion in politics today.

Practice. Having considered theoretical issues, I would like to look at slightly more practical questions about the common good in United States politics today. What do United States citizens want? To what do they aspire? What do they expect from the government? By analyzing presidential speeches, I hope to show that what the American people want is economic security and the freedom to exercise their rights, unhindered by the federal government. Presidential speeches may help to determine to what extent modernity has impacted the idea of the common interest for citizens today. I will particularly be looking at their State of the Union Addresses.

Before I go on, my method requires some explanation. Why look at these speeches? What can they really offer in the way of interpreting the wants of citizens? The first consideration is that without records of public deliberation amongst the people, I cannot directly consult the people to ask what they want. Presidential speechwriters face the same problem, and respond to it by feeling out "public opinion."[45] While James Ceaser identifies this version of public opinion as a "transient" and "inchoate" thing

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[45] James Ceaser, et al., "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1981): 161.

when compared to "the cool and deliberate sense of the community," it seems to be the closest that anyone can get to divining what citizens want without some mechanism for public deliberation.[46] To be influential, these speeches must have some connection with the desires of the people. At the same time, the extent to which speechwriters identify and focus on the wants of their audience is tempered by the practical needs of the person who will be delivering the speech. These concerns could relate to a particular policy direction that the president or his party would like to bring to the forefront of the public consciousness, usually with an eye to gathering popular support either for legislation or for an upcoming election year. Overall, however, the speeches and the research that goes into writing them make them invaluable as barometers for the opinions and needs of the citizens of the United States.

In addition to the research that must be done to make a presidential speech effective is the idea that the president acts as the elected leader of this country. He is able to act because people elected him into office. Because his rule is legitimated by a vote, he is seen as the representative of the people acting in the executive branch. His role as chief executive and representative mean that when he gives a speech, he is acting as the face of the nation. Hopefully, it would follow that a man in that position is articulating the issues that United States citizens believe to be most important.

Former President George W. Bush's speeches are colored by the events of his presidency, especially the terrorist attacks of September eleventh and the war that followed. In speaking about the public good, he primarily addresses homeland security, economic stress, and Medicare. Throughout his presidency his main goals were to "have

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[46] Ibid., 161.

an economy that grows fast enough to employ every man and woman who seeks a job," "high quality, affordable health care for all Americans," "the active defense of the American people," raising standards of education for the purpose of helping Americans secure jobs, and freedom and liberty.[47] While every once in a while, the address moves into a discussion of one of these goals as an expression of the common interest, it inevitably turns individualistic in direction. That is not to say that economic progress and more jobs will not benefit the country as a whole, but instead to wonder why the focus is on job security of individuals. Where is the appeal to virtue? Where is the acknowledgment that without the community, a secure political life would be impossible?

President Barack Obama's speeches reference similar goals, with similar phrasing. His speeches usually begin, as Bush's did, with comments about either homeland security or the economy. An armed attack on a politician in Arizona did, however, result in opening remarks that ask for cooperation between parties as members "of the American family" so that the "common hopes" of individual success can be achieved.[48] Still, this lacks the definition of the common good that we found in Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.

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[47] George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," 20 January, 2004, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/stateoftheunion2004.htm., and George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," 28 January, 2003, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/stateoftheunion2003.html.

[48] Barack Obama, "Address by the President to the Nation," 25 July, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/07/25/address-president-nation.

If these speeches can be counted on as being a reflection of American sentiment[49], then there are some obvious roadblocks to the institutionalization of cooperative deliberation. A nation of people who see the common interest only in light of the advancement of the individual cannot be reasonably expected to look at issues with an eye to the public good as defined earlier in this chapter. Can we come to the table and discuss issues with an eye toward individual prosperity alone? So far, it is not clear that it can be done. First, people would need to realize a substantive common good that is not simply based on Hobbesian procedural hedges that secure liberty, and that is no small task. Only once that is established could people possibly consider that which is in the interest of the whole. It is a partial submission of the private needs to that of the public. It requires a sense of selflessness that is difficult to find in today's public discourse. This has implications not only at the intersection of individual and nation, but also individual and state, individual and community, state and nation, and one nation with another.

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[49] Which, given the amount of research that goes into writing them, can be said to be a reasonable claim.

CHAPTER THREE

Recovering a Tradition

Introduction

How can we move closer to a form of public deliberation that involves citizens striving collectively with good will to articulate what most captures the common interest? This has been my central question. As I mentioned in the prior chapter, one of the problems is that citizens have few, if any, models of calm deliberation in the common interest. The effort to move closer to a healthy form of deliberation must entail, then, the identification of examples. If none are to be found in present culture, then the effort must be made to recover them. As far as I can tell, very few places exist today where citizens can witness, much less participate in, cooperative political discussion.[50] It seems appropriate, therefore, to attempt to consider some ideal models, and I wish at this point not to turn to the latest academic literature on deliberative democracy,[51] but rather to consider some more classic sources for the insights they might yield. I do this in part

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[50] Efforts are being made to move toward something that looks like collective deliberation. Downtown Houston has instituted a National Issues Forum, and Colorado State University has its Center for Public Deliberation, which tries to extend political discussion to the university and the local community. These seem to have varying levels of success, but are not yet long-standing, widely recognized movements in popular culture that have engendered consistent participation.

[51] Here, I mean works like John Bessette's *The Mild Voice of Reason: Deliberative Democracy & American National Government*, Josh Cohen's essay "Deliberative Democracy and Democratic Legitimacy," and Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson's *Why Deliberative Democracy?*.

because the classic sources I want to consider are less technical and specialized, and therefore more accessible as models, and secondly because I want to show that fundamental ideas related to deliberative democracy have been part of our political theoretical tradition for a long time. The three sources I treat in this chapter are Socrates, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Rawls.

Each offers an important glimpse into more deliberative, less competitive political discourse, even if much still remains to be theorized. In order to show how and why the deliberative tradition does not simply dominate in American politics, I contrast it to the conception of political conflict resolution exposed in Madison's "Federalist 10."

Socrates

In some of Plato's dialogues, the problem with public deliberation appears, instructively, in terms of competition and conversation. I have the *Protagoras* and the *Hippias Minor* especially in mind. In both of these works, Socrates' interlocutors push conversation into the realm of competition. Plato's Socrates, however, poses an alternative. He shows us how to enter into conversation, how to conduct conversation, and the difference in goals between a cooperative conversation and a competitive debate.

Socrates poses his questions to Protagoras in a way that seems to resist competition. He does not say, "Protagoras, I know you think that virtue can be taught, but with all of my experience and wisdom I can tell you that it certainly cannot." This would clearly be a challenge that invites debate. It asks Protagoras to go toe to toe with Socrates' experience and wisdom. Instead, he says, "I just don't think that virtue can be taught. But when I hear what you have to say, I waver; I think there must be something

in what you are talking about" and praises Protagoras for his experience.[52] Whether or not Socrates actually believes that virtue can be taught, he reveals how to approach a conversation from a cooperative angle. Although one may strongly believe in one's own set view, one must admit that something might be learned from someone with a different view. But this requires a willingness and ability to suppress one's own views, at least temporarily, so that an issue might be illuminated in a new way.

In the *Hippias Minor*, the conversation begins in a similar manner. Socrates asks Hippias to explain a distinction he has made between Achilles and Odysseus, as Socrates was "unable to follow" him during his speech.[53] Even before he asks this, though, readers can sense that Hippias does not come to the conversation with the same expectations as Socrates. This can be determined by looking at Hippias' opening statements in the dialogue. He says, "ever since I began taking part in the contests at the Olympic games, I have never met anyone superior to me in anything."[54] This positions him as a competitor *par excellence* and shows his intention to win glory in everything he does.

That both works begin in this way suggests that Plato was attentive to the problem of competitiveness in mutual exchange of ideas. Socrates knows his interlocutors will not approach philosophical conversation as he does. Perhaps in an attempt to circumvent their competitive natures, he posits his questions in an instructive

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[52] Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 320b.

[53] Ibid., 364b-c.

[54] Ibid., 364a.

manner. Unfortunately, the interlocutors are incorrigible. However, readers of these dialogues nevertheless learn something about methods of conversation. In fact, the spectacular failures of the stubborn interlocutors help readers to understand why it is so essential to emulate Socrates in discussion.

So far, I have considered only how conversations are begun. But Plato's Socrates also illuminates how they can be conducted. The competitive problem is seen best in the *Protagoras*. Protagoras resists satisfying Socrates' request to speak more briefly on the following ground: "If I were to accede to your request and do as my opponent demanded, I would not be thought superior to anyone."[55] In saying this, Protagoras reveals that he sees this conversation as a competition. But, if we go back to the beginning, Socrates merely asks Protagoras to define what he would teach a potential student.[56] The impasse is solved by Socrates' suggestion to allow Protagoras to ask him questions so that Socrates might demonstrate the brevity with which he wishes Protagoras to speak. Once Protagoras is done asking questions, Socrates will again be allowed to question Protagoras.[57] Immediately after this, Protagoras brings everything back into debate mode. Protagoras presents Socrates with a loaded question about poetry. He continues in what we might call "gotcha" mode until he reaches his moment of glory, where he finally says that a poet, whose poetry Socrates has described as "very well made" is actually a bundle of contradictions.[58]

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[55] Ibid., 335a.

[56] Ibid., 318d.

[57] Ibid., 338c-e.

[58] Ibid., 339b-e.

The competitive nature that Protagoras infuses into his questions must be neutralized if cooperative discussion is to occur. This is done by having someone like Socrates move the exchange from a competition to a conversation that grasps at a better understanding of ideas and problems. However, the difficulty of managing such a shift of verbal mode is revealed by the fact that Socrates is never able to succeed with Protagoras.

On the other hand, Protagoras' competitive angle gets him nowhere, and Socrates notes that he does not "want [Protagoras] to think that my motive in talking with [him] is anything else than to take a good hard look at things that continually perplex me."[59] This beautifully captures what Socrates' goals are in conversation. The point of a genuine conversation is not the same as debate. In debate, one aims to win and persuade for the sake of winning. In conversation, two people might attempt to persuade each other, in the service of reaching a mutually agreeable outcome. In Plato's dialogues, such outcomes are primarily philosophical insights; however the method of cooperative conversation has obvious political parallels. Indeed, the common interest is every bit as perplexing and difficult to determine as any question of Socratic philosophy, and would benefit from the kind of cooperative discussion that Socrates tries to inculcate in his interlocutors. Plato's dialogues give us the opportunity to learn what the interlocutors could not, to imagine how this might apply to politics, and the inspiration to continue searching for the answer.

[59] Ibid., 348c.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

If Socrates' philosophical conversation reminds us that the tradition of cooperative discourse runs deep, Rousseau shows us that it undergoes significant development over time. Rousseau is explicitly interested in political decision-making and especially in thinking of ways to unveil what is in the common interest. His discussion of this stems naturally from his understanding of sovereignty.

Sovereignty, according to Rousseau, is "nothing but the exercise of the general will, can never be alienated, and…is nothing but a collective being, [which] can only be represented by itself."[60] Allegiance to parties and factions is a problem for Rousseau. Sovereignty demands that every citizen participate in expressing the general will. If it is not approached in such a way, then sovereignty devolves into magistracy, which lacks the force of sovereignty.[61] In the case of such corruption, laws cannot be made and the people lose the absolute control they enjoyed over themselves in the social contract. The people would be in violation of the social compact, thereby destroying it.[62] We get a glimpse here of how Rousseau sees factions and their role in the state.[63]

Rousseau does not stop at giving a definition of sovereignty, but offers an account of its origins, writing that "the social pact gives the body politic absolute power over all of its members, and it is this same power which, directed by the general will, bears, as I

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[60] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 57.

[61] Ibid., 58.

[62] Ibid., 52.

[63] Contrast my treatment of "Federalist 10" below.

have said, the name of sovereignty."[64] With the creation of a social pact comes this inalienable, absolute power. Indeed, it could be said that the creation of a social pact constitutes the first sovereign act. All who agree that it is in the best interest of a group of people to come together to form a nation subject themselves to the general will of the one mind with which they create this compact.

Sovereignty does not exist, according to Rousseau, without the general will. It "looks only to the common interest" and is divined from particular wills by "[taking] away the pluses and the minuses, which cancel each other out."[65] After making that calculation, "what is left as the sum of the differences is the general will," which is valid because all citizens contributed their own view.[66]

What should citizens have in mind when deliberating, according to Rousseau? The frame of mind required has two main characteristics. The first is its commitment to the common interest. When "particular interests begin to make themselves felt" in a nation, it is a sign of weakness.[67] Citizens are expected to vote by considering whether or not a proposal "*is advantageous to the State*" as opposed to their particular needs when discussing matters of state.[68] Second, citizens also need specific moral qualities. These civic qualities comprise the other main characteristic of this political life. The person who can vote according to the maxim *is it advantageous to the state* is one who has

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[64] Ibid., 61.

[65] Ibid., 60.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 121-2.

[68] Ibid., 122.

"good sense, justice, and integrity."[69] Clearly, these are virtues. Our emphasis on institution de-emphasizes such virtues so much that we abandon them. Is it possible to have citizens with these qualities constitute a majority of any state? How does a state encourage such qualities and voting processes? Rousseau does not provide an answer. He does, however, leave this as a goal.

In Rousseau's system, people have power. Admittedly, what some particular individual supposes is in the common interest might not always get the vote, but then a citizen would just assume that he had made a mistake.[70] There is no residue of ill will, no feeling of loss. Every member has a stake in voting insofar as he is aware of the contribution that his vote makes in helping to actualize the general will in society. It asks its citizens to deliberate—at least on an individual basis. Otherwise, they could not determine what can help the state and their votes would be blindly cast, which would be nonsensical given their stake in voting. Rousseau is intent on ensuring that people realize the freedom that comes with voting in this way. He points out that once the general will begins to dissolve, a diseased body politic arises. This diseased body symbolizes the slavery of a state that no longer has the common interest at its heart.

What causes deliberation to fail and the common interest to be abandoned? Rousseau places a significant portion of the blame on parties. Parties prove problematic in both sovereignty and the general will. With parties, which collapse the number of voting members, and thus significantly lessens the number of differences in voting that on which divining the common interest depend, citizens begin to deliberate with an eye to

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[69] Ibid., 126.

[70] Ibid., 124.

what is "*advantageous to this man or to this party that this or that opinion pass*."[71] Already, there is an indication of a way that our own system has failed. Political pundits often treat legislation or elections as either helpful or hurtful to a party's cause or strategy. The ability to place a straight-ticket vote even reinforces a devotion to party instead of state.

When it comes to what healthy deliberation should entail, Rousseau says little. But he does give us insight into unhealthy deliberation. He writes about a time "when the citizens, fallen into servitude, no longer have freedom or will. Then fear and flattery turn voting into acclamations; they no longer deliberate, they worship or they curse. Such was the vile manner in which the Senate expressed opinions under the Emperors."[72] When one party, candidate, or piece of legislation is held up as something to be worshipped, or cursed, deliberation has vanished. Interestingly, Rousseau directly excludes "long debates, dissensions, [and] disturbances" from the definition of deliberation.[73] This is where citizens must be careful. It is far too easy to find a rhetoric of either praise or blame that in some ways resembles deliberation and apes its back and forth pattern. While Rousseau does not give a positive definition of deliberation, the negative definition proves helpful.

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[71] Ibid., 122.

[72] Ibid., 123.

[73] Ibid., 123

John Rawls

No doubt the best-known figure in recent history to contribute to the tradition of cooperative (fair) political deliberation is John Rawls, whose *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, summarizes his most important insights. Here I want to focus on his idea of the "veil of ignorance" even though this device was intended to shed light on a moment of decision that is, properly speaking, pre-political, for I think the idea has important implications for what fair deliberation as such requires. This examination of the veil of ignorance is separated into two parts: (1) identifying its goals, and (2) understanding its characteristics.

One goal of the veil of ignorance in the original position is to "specify a point of view from which a fair agreement between free and equal persons can be reached."[74] It is certainly not unreasonable to hope that in discussing and deciding issues relevant to the society as a whole, fair agreements can be reached. And yet, in the United States, not every citizen can really be seen as entering into political conversation as either free or equal. Thus, Rawls' second goal for the veil of ignorance is to "eliminate the bargaining advantages that inevitably arise over time within any society as a result of cumulative social and historical tendencies."[75]

It would be useless for Rawls to set out goals and a new model for deliberation if he did not believe that there were some deficiencies in the current state. While both goals are sensible, he sees that they are not being achieved. Although this is not the focus of

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[74] John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 15.

[75] Ibid., 16.

his book, he seems to see the problems of political conversation as it stands, and provides an inspired intellectual tool for rethinking how we deliberate.

The veil of ignorance acts as the mechanism by which a nation can attempt to engage its citizens as free and equal people reaching agreements that are in tune with the principles of justice. Most striking is the sweeping nature of the ignorance that the veil creates. It requires citizens to conceive of themselves as "free and equal, and not as belonging to this or that social class, or as possessing these or those native endowments, or this or that (comprehensive) conception of the good."[76] It asks for people to lay down many things, and to not act necessarily as a particular citizen, but as a representative for any citizen. Rawls hopes that in not knowing whether or not one is wealthy or poor, smart or dumb, female or male, employed or unemployed, Christian or Muslim, perhaps fairer agreements could be reached concerning politics.[77] This is a peculiar requirement. While Rousseau had hoped that individuals might come to vote with their individualized view of the common good in mind, Rawls calls for citizens to cast aside their individual perspective altogether. Perhaps this leads to fewer chances for adulteration by particular interests. In any case, this aspect of the veil of ignorance calls for a radical change in how people deliberate and choose political goods. While there might be doubts about the practicability of such a change, it is nevertheless instructive as a thought experiment and illuminates a way toward the ideal of genuine cooperativeness.

[76] Ibid., 82.

[77] Ibid., 15.

This idea is what interests me most about Rawls' approach, along with the heuristic device of a "veil of ignorance" to help illuminate it. Of course, one interesting aspect of Rawls' approach is that there is no actual deliberation or conversation occurring, just a tabulation of votes.

Rawls does address more practical matters of public deliberation in his discussion of the "overlapping consensus," but what I want to take from Rawls is rather a tool for measuring the gap between genuinely cooperative and more competitive outcomes. The veil of ignorance brings to light some goals for which we might strive, and indicates that the change needed to achieve these goals might be radical. In this case, the veil's pre-political nature allows it to be more radical than what might be practical; nevertheless, it gives us a jarring sense of what it might be like to get our own special interests out of politics and to consider the common good.

"Federalist No. 10"

As a founding document, *The Federalist Papers* can provide some insight on the ideas that shape the government of the United States. "Federalist 10" is devoted to explaining how to "break and control the violence of faction." [78] I want to focus on the extended sphere proposed in "Federalist 10" in light of the cooperative ideals discussed in connection with Socrates, Rousseau, and Rawls.

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[78] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist and Other Constitutional Papers*, ed. E.H. Scott (Chicago: Albert Scott and Company, 1894), 53.

The extended sphere is a response to the realization that relief from factions can only "be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*."[79] Madison rejects small societies, since they are prone to having fewer factions, which would result in a tyranny of one party or the other. Instead, he opts for an extension of the sphere of society that takes "in a greater variety of parties and interests," which will "make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have such a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other."[80] Simply put, more people results in more individual factions, which results in a smaller chance of having a consistently tyrannical majority. Today, there exist many such separate factions. There are over 4,000 political action committees that represent different people with different ideals.[81] And yet there are two overwhelmingly popular political parties, which virtually all PACs fall in line with. This tendency can dilute the votes in a way that the founders probably may not have intended, but which certainly worried Rousseau.

In light of the fundamental alternatives between competitive and cooperative conversation discussed in connection to Socrates above, how are members of Madison's factions expected to deliberate with members of other factions when it comes to deciding on political policies? Significantly, Madison expects little to no communication between

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[79] Ibid., 56.

[80] Ibid., 59.

[81] Mary Brandenberger, "Number of Federal PACs Increases," *Federal Election Commission*, 9 March 2009, http://www.fec.gov/press/press2009/20090309PACcount.shtml.

different factions because of distrust.[82] His model is unmistakably competitive through and through. But what kid of a foundation does this supply for a political "union"? "Federalist 10" suggests that the United States is founded with the hope that many factions will arise and that they will not be able to deliberate together because they will be distrustful of any communication they have with each other.

Madison's support of factions is striking compared to Rousseau's rejection of parties as essentially disenfranchising groups. Though Madison hopes that by increasing factions he will diffuse their strength, he does not believe they can be avoided; and he is likely correct. And yet to found a political community on the assumption of competition and lack of communication in this way seems to have long-term ill effects. There is no push for men to think about politics other than in accordance with what is advantageous to his party. Citizens are not encouraged (as in Rousseau) to think about how advantageous something is to the state. Citizens are not encouraged to bracket their selfish inclinations and to consider the common good. Finally, the hope that groups will not aggregate with each other because of a sense of distrust is a risky one. Today, there are many PACs that have their own goals, but many are in alliance with each other at the party level, working together to steer a particular party one way or the other. Since only two political parties hold any real power in the government, groups who want some voice in its proceedings often align with a particular party to gain that power.

Considering "Federalist 10" against the backdrop of the cooperative, fair ideals drawn from Socrates, Rousseau, and Rawls is striking. The ideals strive for genuine

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[82] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist and Other Constitutional Papers*, ed. E.H. Scott (Chicago: Albert Scott and Company, 1894), 59.

community and seek mutually endorsed outcomes rather than winners and losers. The more practical teaching of "Federalist 10" focuses on what is likely to work. And yet, while the pragmatism of the American solution is commendable in itself, it may well come at the cost of undermining the very fragile community it seeks to create. Over time, the competitive approach forces citizens further and further apart, as if by centrifugal force. The hostile, vitriolic tenor of political debates today seem to be the result, and the results may get worse if nothing is done to offset the common understanding of politics as competition. What I am attempting in this thesis is to recover and resuscitate more cooperative modes of disclosure. There is, after all, nothing forbidding Americans from attempting to deliberate in common with a sincere hope of achieving the common good. That our founding allows for competition does not mean it forbids cooperation, so there is nothing but the attitudes of citizens themselves standing in the way.

CHAPTER FOUR

On Deliberative Democracy

Introduction

I have spent the last few chapters writing about what the tradition and other contemporary thinkers have to contribute to the conversation on what I call public deliberation. At this point, however, I would like to turn to a book written by deliberative democratic theorists. This type of theory is an outgrowth of the same kind of frustration which inspired my own thesis. It would be impossible for me to conclude this thesis without taking a look at current scholarship that approaches the same problem—albeit with a few marked differences.

I have chosen Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson's book, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* because it has been praised as a work that is:

> A useful introduction to debates that are on the cutting edge of theories concerning democratic deliberation. It also advances the debate in important ways, and although it may not solve once and for all the "paradox" of deliberative democracy, it presents provocative arguments that are sure to spur continuing debate and "deliberation."[83]

Hopefully, this book will allow me to get a handle on what deliberative democracy is, what issues it addresses, and what is going on in the movement today. After understanding these things, I compare their methods and conclusions to my own. This

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[83] Evan Charney, "Why Deliberative Democracy?," *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2005): 310-311.

will allow me to evaluate both the work of Gutmann and Thompson as well as my own in light of several factors.

Deliberative Democracy Defined

The first thing that Gutmann and Thompson do is establish a definition of deliberative democracy. They work through this in several ways, beginning with a fundamental definition, which is that "deliberative democracy affirms the need to justify decisions made by citizens and their representatives."[84] Thankfully, the writers do not simply leave us with this bare bones definition. They flesh out and defend it over the course of the first few chapters. Requirements are explained and characteristics are added. Then the discussion moves to an explanation and defense of where the writers' version of deliberative democracy falls with regard to certain tensions amongst different theories, which provides readers with a better grasp of the characteristics of deliberative democracy as defined by the authors. At this point, I would like to make a comment about the general accessibility of this work. While it is possible that I am missing some esoteric way in which to read this, I find this book easy to follow. This is significant because if deliberative democracy is to become a fixture in civic life across social, economic, or educational backgrounds, the reasoning behind it must be presented in such a way that someone who is not accustomed to reading obtuse scholarly writing can engage with it.[85]

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[84] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

[85] Considering that most people, including some scholars, are unable to read modern scholarship without great difficulty, the writing style used in this book is a breath of fresh air with its readability.

Given the fundamental definition of deliberative democracy, Gutmann and Thompson provide four requirements that would necessarily follow from it. The first is "*reason-giving*," which simply means that deliberative democracy requires people to give reasons that "should be accepted by free and equal person seeking fair terms of cooperation."[86] This seems similar in some ways to Rawls' overlapping consensus in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*.

A second requirement is accessibility. This requirement has two prongs. Both the deliberation and the content used in the deliberation must be public.[87] Without this requirement, a person could claim having deliberated democratically within his own mind—which, given our fundamental definition, would be absurd anyway.

The next requirement has to do with the aim of deliberative democracy. The "process aims at producing a decision that is *binding* for some period of time."[88] I find this oddly practical. While I want to say that this is too practical, the name deliberative democracy seems to carry with it implications of practicality with which I do not agree, but are consistent with the theory.

Lastly, deliberative democracy requires a dynamic process. The process must be dynamic because "although deliberation aims at a justifiable decision, it does not presuppose that the decision at hand will in fact be justified, let alone that a justification today will suffice for the indefinite future."[89] By identifying this as a requirement of

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[86] Ibid., 3.

[87] Ibid., 4.

[88] Ibid., 6.

[89] Ibid.

deliberative democracy, Gutmann and Thompson leave room for “a continuing dialogue” over time.[90] Slipped in as an implication of this last requirement is the “principle of the economy of moral disagreement” which places a specific limitation on what qualifies as an acceptable reason within the framework of deliberative democracy. Any person providing a reason under the rules of this principle “should try to find justifications that minimize their differences with their opponents.”[91] Why this automatically follows from the dynamic character of the deliberative process, I am not sure. It is admirable enough, but it feels like a completely different requirement that is not at all contingent upon a dynamic process.

Deliberative democratic theory, like many other overarching theories, has branches that have split over certain tensions that become more apparent as a theory becomes more developed. Gutmann and Thompson address several of these factors. Before they enter into discussion over these, they explain two key points about deliberative democracy. The first is an explanation of how democratic the process should be. While they reference the aristocratic tendencies of ancient deliberative practices, they aim for a more “expansive definition of who is included in the process of deliberation—an inclusive answer to the questions of who has the right (and effective opportunity) to deliberate or choose the deliberators, and to whom do the deliberators owe their justifications.”[92] They point to Jürgen Habermas as the thinker who gave deliberation “a more thoroughly democratic foundation” than anything that that had been presented

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 7.

[92] Ibid., 9-10.

earlier.[93] By expanding the deliberating classes to include as many people as possible, Gutmann and Thompson shy away from elitism. The problem here, however, is education. I firmly believe that for deliberation to be as inclusive as possible, education simply must change. Gutmann and Thompson agree, stressing that "an important part of democratic education is learning how to deliberate well enough to be able to hold representatives accountable," which would require a schools system that "aims to prepare children to become free and equal citizens."[94] I often wonder if the public school system accomplishes this task with any consistency, and realize that a system in which "high school graduation rates…are still far too low, and [that] there are steep gaps in achievement between middle-class and poor students."[95] Education, as a service, is not provided equally. How, then, can children learn to be the citizens that deliberative democracy requires? Here, Gutmann and Thompson stop short of giving a remedy. If deliberative democracy stands on the abilities of a nation's citizens to deliberate reasonably, why do they gloss over the topic? I wish that more were done here in this regard. While they may offer it in another book, it seems to be a lacuna in this one.

Another point that the authors explain is the purpose of deliberative democracy. Gutmann and Thompson write that their intended purpose of deliberative democracy is to "promote legitimacy of collective decisions," "encourage public-spirited perspectives on

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[93] Ibid., 9.

[94] Ibid., 35.

[95] Joel I. Klein, Condoleezza Rice, et al., "U.S. Education Reform and National Security," *Independent Task Force* Report No. 68, 2012.

public issues," and "promote mutually respectful processes of decision-making."[96] In doing these things, they hope that people might "arrive at a genuine moral compromise" when discussing politics.[97] These are consistent with what readers have felt from the beginning of the work. Once again, I must comment on the accesibility of this book. Gutmann and Thompson treat deliberative democracy with a consistency that allows readers to clearly trace the threads of thought that were produced in the introduction throughout the work.

Deliberative Democracy Refined

After clarifying two foundational issues, Gutmann and Thompson begin the work of situating their idea within the framework of deliberative democracy as a whole. This involves looking at the main issues that have resulted in tension between various strands of theory. Here, I will go over a few of the key distinctions briefly. The first is an explanation of deliberative democracy's character as either instrumental or expressive. In their view, deliberative democracy is instrumental insofar as it "should contribute to fulfilling the central political function of making good decisions and laws."[98] However, it must also be expressive, because if they are not then "binding decisions [will be] routinely made without deliberation," which would result in legislators being able to

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[96] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 10-11.

[97] Ibid., 12.

[98] Ibid., 22.

make important decisions without having to justify them to those whom they will affect.[99] This rejects the notion that it must be either one or the other.

They address the tension between procedural and substantive in a similar manner, defining deliberative democracy as both procedural and substantive because its provisional principles apply not only to the substantive matters that might be discussed, but also the procedures that are laid down in this book.[100] This is qualified later. It turns out that a "general rejection of the requirement that binding political decisions must be justified by moral reasons" cannot be entertained.[101] While this is a reasonable qualification, one must wonder why this one thing must not happen. Indeed, if some future tyrant were able to speak passionately enough (as Gutmann and Thompson allow, without fear of demagoguery) to convince people that it would be rational to allow future decisions to be made without moral reasons as justification, then general procedures and the substantive requests of deliberative democracy would seem to be met. In some ways, this points to a weakness. Men are fallible, even when they believe that their decisions have been made with the utmost attention to reason. Gutmann and Thompson admit to that several places. This qualification implies that no completely provisional idea of democracy can be safe from this fallibility. I am unsure of what else to make of this, but I do believe that it is an interesting chink in Gutmann and Thompson's argument for the super-provisionality that deliberative democracy affords.

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[99] Ibid., 22-23.

[100] Ibid., 26.

[101] Ibid., 114.

A third point of tension for democratic theorists is whether or not it should be pluralistic or consensual. Deliberative democracy must be pluralistic because a "democracy can govern effectively and prosper morally if its citizens seek to clarify and narrow their deliberative disagreements without giving up their core moral commitments."[102] If it were consensual, then people would live in tyranny. This seems to reject the importance of the common good that was discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Here, however, they are addressing "consensus democrats," who seem to expand the idea of the common good as described in this thesis. In fact, they are presented as expanding the idea of what the common good entails so much that it "threatens to become tyrannical."[103] I do not see anything that poses this threat in my own idea of the common good and its relationship to public deliberation. In responding to consensus democrats, Gutmann and Thompson hope that their pluralistic view of democracy is "both more charitable and more realistic than the pursuit of the comprehensive common good" does.[104]

The last major point I would like to look at is where they fall on the line between deliberative democracy as representative or participatory. Here they try to be both, understanding that they must "accept that most democratic decisions are made by representatives, but would encourage more of those forms of popular participation that increase the quality of deliberation or the fairness of representation."[105] Because of this,

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[102] Ibid., 29.

[103] Ibid., 28.

[104] Ibid., 29.

[105] Ibid., 29-30.

civil society must "equip citizens to deliberate in politics. Because deliberative politics works best when citizens do not experience it as an alien activity."[106] Again, this goes back to education. The people must have an education that prepares them for deliberative democracy. If nothing else, we must remember that senators and representatives come from the people. Children who are not given access to adequate teachers and curricula may one day become part of a government that demands deliberation.

Response to Objections

So, this is where they fall. Deliberative democracy sits squarely between several of the big issues in democratic theory, but chooses to be pluralistic instead of consensual. It has a clearly defined purpose, with procedural and substantive foundations that help to realize that purpose. The next step is responding to objections. In summary, Gutmann and Thompson find objections based on deliberative biases and undesirable consequences are without merit. In the first case, they explain that deliberative democracy levels the playing ground with its principles and calls for institutional changes that eliminate "those biases in the political process (including deliberative forums) that derive from unequal wealth and entrenched power."[107] As to the problem of undesirable consequences, they respond with the provisional nature of any decision within their framework.[108] If a decision does not have positive results, people are able to come together and revise their

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[106] Ibid., 35.

[107] Ibid., 49-50.

[108] Ibid., 53.

previous decision, provided that they also defend the new one in accordance with the requirements of deliberative democracy.

Deliberative Democracy Expanded

Procedural

In the remaining chapters, Gutmann and Thompson provide some more clarifications on deliberative democracy, as well as pointed investigations of deliberative democracy and health care as well as truth commissions. For the purpose of this thesis, I will only review the chapters that deal mainly with the theory of deliberative democracy.

The question of what can be precluded from the political agenda is addressed here. This is essential to deliberative democracy, because it helps us to understand what exactly was meant when Gutmann and Thompson admitted that "not all issues, all the time, require deliberation."[109] Because deliberative democracy requires that discussion must result in some kind of binding action, it is important to understand what is outside of the purview of deliberative politics. They rely on a "Lockean form of the argument for toleration."[110] Made up of three premises, the Lockean argument broadens the issues that are able to be a part of deliberation. The first premise is a "validity premise" that has three requirements: (1) "the argument for the position must presuppose a disinterested perspective that could be adopted by any member of society," (2) "any premises in the argument that depend on empirical evidence or logical inference should in principle be open to challenge by generally accepted methods of inquiry, and (3) "premises for which

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[109] Ibid., 3.

[110] Ibid., 67.

empirical evidence or logical inference is not appropriate should not be radically implausible."[111] The second premise is a "distrust of government," which asks if the government can reasonably be trusted to make a decision on the matter.[112] Lastly, Locke's argument "favors rational deliberation" because it questions what harmful things would follow if the government did not act.[113] These three premises give us some way to determine what can be on the political agenda. Without it, deliberative democracy could become dangerous, ignoring problems that it should address, and addressing problems that should be left alone.

Mutual respect represents another important issue for the authors. It is essential to deliberative democracy in several respects. Without it, it would be difficult to resolve issues that stem from moral conflicts, and skepticism could prevent people from even wanting to deliberate.[114] Mutual respect asks people to hold a certain position "because it is a moral position, not for reasons of political advantage," to have their actions be consistent with their speech, and "accept the broader implications of the principles presupposed by their moral positions."[115] These requirements set the tenor of deliberation. Hopefully, these considerations will engender a willingness to hear other viewpoints, and sincerity in speech.

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[111] Ibid., 72.

[112] Ibid., 76.

[113] Ibid., 69, 76.

[114] Ibid., 80.

[115] Ibid., 81-2.

With mutual respect, we may be able to come to something that earlier descriptions of deliberative democracy did not insinuate as possible. That is to say that through deliberating with mutual respect, we might arrive at "a common good that is compatible with continuing moral disagreement."[116] It seems, then, that we can strive for the common good. We may not always agree. We may have to revise it every once in a while. In the end, deliberative democracy does allow for a notion of the common good to be a factor in the process. While it may not be the driving force of deliberation, the idea of it having a place in deliberation is not rejected.

Substantive

"Basic liberty and fair opportunity" are both necessary for deliberative democracy.[117] Gutmann and Thompson refute pure proceduralists, who maintain that the addition of substantive principles should come from citizens and not theorists, and through "actual democratic decision-making" instead of "hypothetical theoretical reasoning."[118] In defense of the substantive parts of deliberative democracy is the fact that they are to be held both as "morally and politically provisional."[119] This means that, aside from the qualification that I noted earlier, every piece of deliberative democracy—procedural or substantive—can be challenged and revised as citizens or representatives deem necessary. The argument is convincing, and their unique conception of deliberative

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[116] Ibid., 92.

[117] Ibid., 95.

[118] Ibid., 96.

[119] Ibid., 97.

democracy and how it might practically work unites some pieces of democratic theory that can sometimes seem diametrically opposed.

Unique Character of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy, as defined by Gutmann and Thompson, "leaves open the possibility that the moral values expressed by a wide range of theories may be justifiable" because it "contains a set of principles that prescribes fair terms of cooperation."[120] This all flows from the principle "that citizens owe one another justifications for the laws they collectively impose on one another."[121] Unlike many first-order theories, this is a dynamic conception of political justification, in which change over time is an essential feature of justifiable principles."[122] Even many second-order theories do not have this characteristic. Because the principles are both morally and politically provisional, the theory has greater depth than others that the authors identify.

At this point, Gutmann and Thompson provide readers with a final summary of the principles of deliberative democracy—which together form a unique theory of democracy. The three principles are now termed "reciprocity, publicity, and accountability," but reflect the same principles explained at the beginning.[123] Some details are added, though, now that we have been given a deeper understanding of deliberative democracy. Reciprocity is now more clearly defined as a principle that

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[120] Ibid., 125.

[121] Ibid., 126.

[122] Ibid., 132.

[123] Ibid., 133.

"governs the ongoing process by which the conditions and content of justice are determined in specific cases."[124] Of course, this looks back to the idea of mutual respect. Publicity "requires that reason-giving be public in order that it be mutually justifiable."[125] Lastly, accountability "specifies that officials who make decisions on behalf of other people, whether or not they are electoral constituents, should be accountable to those people."[126] The addition here is important. It expands accountability across states and nations, requiring decision-makers to be accountable to anyone who might be affected by their decisions—whether or not they can be held directly accountable by a vote. This forces the issue of foreign policy and interactions, making deliberative democracy now applicable not only to domestic relations, but also to foreign ones. Substantively, deliberative democracy includes "basic liberty, basic opportunity, and fair opportunity," which all flow from reciprocity.[127] In the end:

> Deliberative democracy is different from other theories because it contains within itself the means of its own revision. Its provisional status invites ongoing challenge to its own principles as well as those of other theories. It constructively embraces—without exalting—the moral conflict that pervades contemporary politics.[128]

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 135.

[126] Ibid., 135.

[127] Ibid., 137.

[128] Ibid., 138.

Public Deliberation and Deliberative Democracy

Now I hope to look at public deliberation and deliberative democracy together. The first difference is method. While I rely heavily on cues from the tradition, Gutmann and Thompson seem to borrow here and there. This text focuses mainly on other contemporary theories as well as practical issues. My concerns, while rooted in practical problems, have been worked out through the thoughts of those who came before me. Since those thinkers did not treat deliberation comprehensively, I chose to take pieces of their works that I feel point toward a theory of deliberation and transform them into a more cohesive way of conceptualizing what I have called public deliberation.

Also, I want deliberation to extend to the public. People who are in everyday conversation should be able to employ the principles of public deliberation or deliberative democracy without necessarily having to result in some binding decision. While I can understand the practical need for this, I am dedicated not only to how deliberation can have some direct effect on policy, but to how it can enrich the life of a citizen and encourage political participation. In this sense, deliberative democracy seems geared toward expediency instead of the human experience. Perhaps Gutmann and Thompson are not as practical as I fashion them to be and they would allow for (and encourage) people to use the framework of deliberative democracy for political discussion around the dinner table, in a coffee shop, or in a classroom.

As mentioned earlier, the driving force of public deliberation is the common good. While Gutmann and Thompson do admit that some sense of the common good might be reach through deliberative democracy, it is not the spirit that moves the discussion. Their hope is that decisions made in light of democratic deliberation can be

justified to others. My hope, on the other hand, is that people come together to deliberate with the common good in mind, willing to strive collectively for it through reasoned discussion. These are two fundamentally different approaches to deliberation.

That there is a fundamental difference between the ways in which we approach deliberation is not to say that deliberative democracy is not without its merits. It is a well-reasoned theory that has a more concrete sense of itself in the practical realm than I can offer in an undergraduate thesis on public deliberation. I have only been able to scratch the surface of what it is that I want to define. Gutmann and Thompson have a theory that has been carefully crafted over years of work that takes into consideration objections, their responses to those objections, and even addresses the creation of a practical policy agenda, all within a clearly defined framework that has easily understandable principles. In many ways, we are hoping for the same things. We want representatives to be able to approach legislation in a constructive, cooperative way. We hope that individual citizens are able to have access to deliberation and justifications from their representatives, as well as have a say by being asked (and equipped) to deliberate amongst themselves. Despite some differences, several of our aims are similar.

Deliberative democracy and public deliberation are two branches of democratic theory. Closely connected, but still not the same, public deliberation is still only beginning to come into its own. Reading this work has exposed me to new ideas to consider as I continue to shape and reshape the idea that I have begun to form in this thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

A Preliminary Idea

This thesis offers at the same time both more and less than I had planned. As with many theses, the structure and method changed to fit an ever-expanding project. The seed of my frustration has resulted in an idea that cannot be fully formulated and identified in the time given to create any undergraduate thesis. Nevertheless, substantial work has been done to lay the groundwork for future thought. For the transformation of an inchoate idea into this seed of a theory that is only beginning to grow, I am deeply indebted to my mentor, professors, and classmates who pushed this idea to become something much bigger than me. At the outset, I clarified that this is a thought experiment. Insofar as that statement goes, I feel that I have adequately achieved the completion of at least one of my aims in my introduction.

Tying the Ends

My aim was to flesh out what public deliberation might entail. It seems to require what I requested from the outset. People must be able to come together and deliberate, cooperatively, with an eye to the common good. Only now, I have addressed an issue that the common good presents. The problem is that we must reclaim some sense of the common good, as it has become the common interest, or the aggregate of private interests. This stems from the treatment of politics as an economic game. A certain number of dollars can be divided into funds that aid private interests, and the struggle is

even worse that one in which it is every man for himself. Interest groups have become formidable forces that lobby for federal funds, and sometimes one interest group has more lobbying power than another, so more money goes to Medicaid than to unemployment benefits. A situation like this seems to be a major roadblock to public deliberation, and as such the problem of the common good must be addressed. Recovering the ideas of the common good that can be found in Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas is, I think, not a terrible place to start. In this sense, I hope that I have set down strong roots for later thought on the common good and public deliberation.

I hoped to understand public deliberation better by looking to the tradition to see what was there to support an idea that stemmed from my own concerns. While there were no perfect models, I engaged with Socrates, Rousseau, and Rawls in an attempt to find some direction. From these thinkers, I was able to better explain the importance of cooperative conversation to a nation. Once having a better grasp of that, I was able to compare that information to Madison's "Federalist No. 10," which seems to set up our nation for the economic problem that I described in the second chapter.

The final chapter on deliberative democracy provided me with some perspective. It helped me to understand what my fledgling idea looked like in the face of a massively well-developed theory. Also, I could see that there were some important differences that made the beginnings of my own theory somewhat unique. Whether or not my theory will ever seem as viable as one so masterfully crafted, I might not know. But after reading current, similar scholarship, I am more sure of my own ideas and am better able to understand that public deliberation is its own unique idea that, given cultivation, could become more defined and more practical.

Some questions that I had identified in the introduction are:

(1) How can we move closer to a form of public deliberation about pressing issues in which citizens strive collectively to articulate the common good?

(2) What is the common good?

(3) Why does deliberation *need* to be collective?

(4) How collective need it be?

(5) What does it mean to “strive collectively” in deliberation?

(6) What kind of deliberation are we engaging in now, if any at all?

(7) Where might such deliberation occur?

I will attempt to provide brief answers to these that have either been explained in the thesis, or have come to mind in light of the thesis as a whole. The first question is the most complicated. Because it concerns the answers to the other questions, I will address them first. Question two asks about the common good. It would be incorrect and irresponsible of me to give some sort of list that claims to be a comprehensive list of common goods. Given the background to the common good that I address in Chapter Two, as well as contemporary problems, I would like to say the common good is that which citizens and representatives, having come together to deliberate cooperatively, decide is best for the nation as a whole. That much, I feel comfortable saying. Questions three and four are tied to this one. For deliberation to strive for the common good, those who are a part of the commonwealth must be a part of the deliberation. As many as possible must participate to get the best sense of what the good for the common might be. This must be tempered, however, by the need for education. Those deliberating must

have an education conducive to producing habits of conversation that lend themselves to public deliberation. If not, then the masses deliberating could no more ascertain the common good than a confused cat could.

Question five, which asks, "what does it mean to strive collectively?" is answered generally by this thesis. Striving collectively involves citizens working together through deliberative discussion to understand what the common good is. It is a struggle. Various people, with radically different moral beliefs will make this an endeavor that is difficult, but hopefully worth it.

It is clear to me that we are not engaging in deliberation, but in combat when we discuss politics. Select places act as havens for cooperative deliberation, but they are difficult to find. Only some university classrooms foster deliberation, very few town halls offer cooperative discussion that does not result in fierce and unreasonable debate, and society at large seems unfriendly to deliberation. That is how I see the answer to question six.

The question of where public deliberation might occur is a complicated one. Clearly, we are a nation that is too large to come together in one physical space. It would be inefficient, even for most of a single city's population to meet in one location. Instead, it seems that it must occur on a smaller scale. Perhaps the solution is an electronic journal that provides starting points for online discussion. Maybe deliberative polling is the answer.[129] In all honesty, the answer to the question of "where" is elusive.

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[129] See James Fishkin, *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

So, I find myself back at the beginning with the big question. How can we move closer to a form of public deliberation about pressing issues in which citizens strive collectively to articulate the common good? It is going to take more than I can offer here. I know that it will require a change in education. Children must be taught how to become a part of a process that enables them to collectively articulate the common good. Parents must reinforce these habits. The media must take on a different relationship with politics that relies more on facts than on catering to a specific group for ratings. People have to care. I am not sure to what extent it is possible that one can make other people care, or if it would even be beneficial to "make" people care. Certainly, I have no intention of forcing these changes, nor would I want anyone to take my ideas as a springboard that helps provide some grounding upon which anyone could justify forcing such changes upon any civil society.

Conclusion

I have, I hope, done what I have intended to do in this thesis. I followed my roadmap, I tied up the loose ends as tidily as I could, and I have pushed myself to think through an idea in a way that I have never before had to do. Perhaps other people might think more about this idea, too. It is certainly an important one for the health of a nation, and cannot be ignored. I am not saying that public deliberation can solve all of our problems. But, maybe it can help us understand how to begin attempting to address the problems that we find in our nation in a healthier way that is more conducive to unification than division.

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